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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 001576

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STATE FOR G, EAP/ANP AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2017

TAGS: PGOV PHUM AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA COMMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN ASIA PACIFIC DEMOCRACY PARTNERSHIP

REF: A. STATE 148559

1B. CANBERRA 1417

1C. STATE 131561

1D. WHITON-COLE E-MAIL OF 10/18/2007

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole for reasons 1.4 (b),(d).).

11. (U) Arthur Spyrou, Director of the United Nations and Commonwealth Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, confirmed to POLCOUNS during an October 26 meeting that Australia was committed to participate in the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP). Jonathan Richardson, Australia's High Commissioner to Ghana, who would be attending the Community of Democracies meeting in Mali, would represent Australia at the proposed November 15 APDP breakfast meeting in Bamako and would be prepared to engage in a robust exchange of views. (Australia does not maintain a mission in Mali.)

12. (C) While Australia viewed the initiative positively and believed it had a place among other democracy initiatives in the region, Spyrou commented, other countries were concerned how the APDP would fit into the regional architecture. Spyrou said South Korea, which had invested heavily in the CD, had expressed considerable angst to Australia about how the APDP would work and its relationship to existing and proposed programs. For example, the South Koreans were concerned about how the APDP tracked with a similar initiatives developed by Japan and Indonesia. (Note: Spyrou said he had been unable to develop any information about a Japanese democracy initiative and would appreciate whatever the U.S. could share on this. End note.) Spyrou was quick

to add the South Koreans did not seem to be saying "Put on the brakes" but simply flagging the need to proceed with caution to avoid stepping on any toes.

¶3. (C) Spyrou noted that Foreign Minister Downer and Secretary Rice had shared preliminary thoughts on APDP

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activities, such as small-scale capacity-building projects, during their bilateral meeting on the margins of APEC in Sydney in September. Although the APDP was an American initiative, Australia agreed that it would be important to identify an Asian country that could take leadership of it, Spyrou commented. He queried whether the United States had identified an Asian champion of the program. POLCOUNS noted the United States supported Indonesia hosting the inaugural APDP meeting. Spyrou said Australia would strongly endorse Indonesia, which had conducted democratic elections and which would have the added advantage of helping to bring along the other ASEAN members. It would be particularly important to generate high-level buy-in to the APDP before the end of the year, he observed, otherwise participation would be relegated to lower-level officials, guaranteeing that the initiative would be "stillborn." In regard to specific projects, it would be desirable to give countries "ownership" of projects they suggested, a tactic that the UN was increasingly embracing, Spyrou added.

¶4. (C) On the question of APDP membership, Spyrou noted, South Korea favored a restricted membership, at least initially, in order to avoid contending with "difficult" countries whose commitment to democracy was questionable. For Australia's part, he added, the membership question could be reserved for later discussion. Likewise, he said, it would be best to set aside for now the China-Taiwan question, which may develop a head of steam.

¶5. (C) Spyrou said Australia planned to play a role in helping to allay regional concerns about the APDP. He invited U.S. views on other possible roles for Australia in advance of the Partnership's launch, adding the caveat that the caretaker status of the Australian government in advance of the November 24 federal election meant the GOA would be constrained from agreeing to any major new policies or programs.

MCCALLUM